

Amendments to the Claims:

Please cancel claim 16 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter thereof.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (previously presented) An apparatus for handling sheets containing information thereon, comprising:

a movable sheet transfer member having a transfer surface which contacts a selected one of the sheets containing the information thereon so as to transfer the selected sheet along a transfer direction;

a sheet supporting surface area disposed so as to be contactable with the selected sheet which is being transferred;

an information reader arranged along the transfer direction of the selected sheet so as to face a surface of the selected sheet which is being transferred and delimiting an information reading range within which the information contained on the selected sheet is readable by the information reader, which information reading range includes an information reading point at which the information contained on the selected sheet is read from the selected sheet by the information reader;

wherein, as seen in a view direction which is perpendicular to both of a thickness direction and the transfer direction of the selected sheet, a tangential line, at a boundary point of the transfer surface of the sheet transfer

member from which the selected sheet starts to separate from the transfer surface of the transfer member, extends in a side area of an imaginary straight line passing through the boundary point and the information reading point so as to intersect the sheet supporting surface area at a position between the boundary point and a furthest extent of the information reading range from the boundary point;

wherein the boundary point corresponds to a point at which the sheet transfer member contacts the selected sheet; and wherein the boundary point and the sheet supporting surface area are spaced from each other in a direction perpendicular to the imaginary straight line, and the selected sheet is pressed against the sheet supporting area at a position between the boundary point and the information reading range.

2. (canceled)

3. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the sheet supporting surface area extends to guide therealong to the information reading range the selected sheet.

4. (canceled)

5. (canceled)

6. (canceled)

7. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a supplemental movable sheet transfer member having a supplemental transfer surface diagnosed in opposition to the movable transfer member which contacts the selected sheet to facilitate transfer of the selected sheet.

8. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

a supplemental movable sheet transfer member having a supplemental transfer surface diagnosed in opposition to the movable transfer member which contacts the selected sheet to facilitate transfer of the selected sheet, and

first and second press members respectively opposing the sheet transfer member and supplemental sheet transfer member such that the selected sheet is pressed between the sheet transfer member and the first press member in a first press direction and between the supplemental sheet transfer member and the second press member in a second press direction.

9. (previously presented) An apparatus for handling sheets containing information thereon, comprising:

a movable sheet transfer roller having a transfer surface for contacting a selected one of the sheets containing the information thereon and transferring the selected sheet along a transfer direction;

a sheet supporting surface area for contacting the selected sheet which is being transferred;

an information reader arranged along the transfer direction to face a surface of the selected sheet which is being transferred, and delimiting an information reading range within which the information contained on the selected sheet is readable from the selected sheet by the information reader,

the information reading range including an information reading point at which the information contained on the selected sheet is read;

a press roller opposing the sheet transfer roller such that the selected sheet can be pressed between the sheet transfer roller and the press roller at a boundary point on the selected sheet in a press direction,

wherein an imaginary straight line passing the boundary point in a direction perpendicular to the press direction intersects the sheet supporting surface area as seen in a view direction perpendicular to a thickness direction and the transfer direction of the selected sheet, and

wherein the pressing direction is parallel to another imaginary straight passing the center of the sheet transfer roller and the center of the press roller.

10. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

a press member opposing the sheet transfer member for pressing the selected sheet between the sheet transfer member and the press member,

said press member including a press surface for contacting the selected sheet and pressing the selected sheet between the press surface and the transfer surface,

wherein a compression resistance surface rigidity of one of the press and transfer surfaces is different from that of the other.

11. (original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the sheet transfer member is a roller rotatable on an rotational axis.

12. (original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the sheet transfer member is a belt rotatable along an annular course.

13. (canceled)

14. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the information reader includes a pair of input points opposed to each other in such a manner that the input points face to respective sides of the selected sheet in a thickness direction to read the information contained on the selected sheet through the input points.

15. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein when viewed from a direction perpendicular to a thickness direction and a transferred direction of the selected sheet such that the sheet supporting surface area would be extendable in a direction parallel to a support line

direction which passes the information reading range, the relations of $\alpha > \tan^{-1}(h/L)$ and $\alpha < \tan(1/\mu pg)$ are satisfied where:

α is an inclination angle between the support line direction and the tangential line at the boundary point of the transfer surface of the sheet transfer member,

L is a distance between the boundary point of the transfer surface of the sheet transfer member and the information reading point in the support line direction,

h is a distance between the boundary point of the transfer surface of the sheet transfer member and the sheet supporting surface area in a direction perpendicular to the support line direction, and

μpg is a frictional coefficient between the selected sheet and the transfer surface of the sheet transfer member.

16. (canceled)

17. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a supplemental sheet supporting surface area opposed to the sheet supporting surface and contactable with the one of the sheets, said supplemental sheet supporting surface area being movable with respect to the sheet supporting surface area such that the selected sheet is urged in a direction toward the sheet supporting surface area.

18. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 17, wherein the supplemental sheet supporting surface area is opposed to the information reading range so that the selected sheet is urged in a direction toward the information reading range.

19. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a supplemental sheet supporting surface area opposing the sheet supporting surface area and contactable with the selected sheet, said supplemental sheet supporting surface area extending in such a manner that the selected sheet is guided toward the sheet supporting surface area.

20. (original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the sheet supporting surface area is curved.

21. (previously presented) An apparatus for handling sheets containing information thereon, comprising:

a movable sheet transfer member being including a transfer surface for contacting a selected one of the sheets and transferring the selected sheet along a transfer direction;

a sheet supporting surface area for contacting the selected sheet;

an information reader arranged along the transfer direction so as to face a surface of the selected sheet and delimiting an information reading range within which the information contained on the selected sheet is readable from the selected sheet by the information reader, the information

reading range including an information reading point at which the information is read;

a distance detector facing the selected sheet for measuring a value changing in accordance with a change in distance between the selected sheet and the information reader;

wherein the information reader includes a light emitter for projecting a light to the selected sheet and a light receiver for receiving the light reflected by the selected sheet to read the information contained on the selected sheet from the selected sheet, and

wherein the light emitter is controlled in accordance with the value such that an intensity of the light emitted by the light emitter is increased in accordance with the increase of distance between the one of the sheets and the information reader.

22. (canceled)

23. (canceled)

24. (canceled)

25. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein:

the sheet transfer member includes a drive roller and a driven roller mounted along a clamping direction line;

α is an inclination angle between a support line direction and a tangential line of a boundary point of the transfer surface of the sheet transfer

member from which boundary point the selected sheet starts to separate away from the transfer surface;

the clamping direction line is inclined by the angle α causing an offset between the drive roller and the driven roller.

26. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the information contained on the selected sheet is readable in the information reading range.

27. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the information contained on the selected sheet is readable from the information reading range.

28. (canceled)

29. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the apparatus forms a part of an automated teller machine and the sheets containing information thereon are paper money from which information thereon is read by the information reader.